



Governor Terry E. Branstad
Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds
San Wong, Director

**Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans
Quarterly Meeting
January 30, 2015
Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families
801 University Avenue
Room 129
Des Moines, IA**

Call to order:

Meeting called to order at 1:25 pm by Chairperson Clair Rudison

Roll Call:

Present: Clair Rudison, Rita Davenport, Madai Taylor, Bryan Burton (conference call), San Wong, Ex-officio

Absent: Kimberly Wayne, Kenneth Morris, Veronica Sutton

Staff: Monica Stone, Kim Cheeks

Absent: Alba Perez

Welcome / Introductions:

Doyle Landry – Positive Vision

Gary Lawson – Iowa Juneteenth Observance

Celeste Lawson – Iowa Juneteenth Observance

Chris Johnson – Chair, Iowa Juneteenth Observance (conference call)

Approve Minutes

Burton motioned to approve the minutes of December 5, 2014, Taylor second, approved unanimously.

Financial Report

Wong reported that the office is half way through the year, right on target of where we need to be with the budget, and there is nothing new to mention.

Public Comment

Doyle Landry – Positive Vision

Landry referenced the Dec. 5, 2014 minutes regarding Lee Rood, reporter from the Des Moines Register, presence at the meeting. He mentioned her leading the watchdog effort in regards to media. He also commented to keep in mind the forum held by Des Moines Register on race, ethics, and politics in media. Dept. of Human Rights Day on the Hill on Feb. 26th wonders why the budget stays the same year after year as relates to tax payers, feels there is a need for increase to represent the African Americans in state.

Lawson pointed out he wrote a follow up addendum to the December 5, 2014 letter of request to transfer the Iowa Juneteenth Observance to the commission. The addendum tries to address the questions and concerns raised by staff after that meeting.

Old Business

Reports

Director

Dept. of Human Rights will make a budget presentation on Feb. 10th at 10:00 am at the state capitol to the budget subcommittee. Governor Branstad recommended a small increase to the department of \$30,000. If approved, the increase will be split between CAS and CJJP divisions. Wong noted DHR Day on the Hill is Feb. 26th not Feb. 25th as listed on the agenda. Monica Stone started on December 1, who replaced Danielle Plogmann. CJJP has some projects coming up. She mentioned some federal projects in CJJP division will be transferred to state appropriation. Funding for juvenile justice reentry projects just started. Asian Pacific Islanders held a roundtable in the fall, part of the Whitehouse Initiative of Asian Pacific Islanders. Regional directors from federal agencies visited to discuss the challenges and resources available for the Asian community. They will return sometime this year to continue the conversation.

Rudison questioned the amount of increase recommended by the Governor, Wong replied \$30,000 will be dispersed among FTE's for CJJP and CAS divisions. Increase will not cover salary increases or benefits.

Office

Written report submitted. Cheeks gave an update on the work of the National Coalition of State African American Coalitions emphasizing a resolution created, and other information about the commission. Cheeks then highlighted various articles included in the materials provided for each. She also reminded commissioners to send items they wish to have shared with the others members and staff.

Commissioners:

Taylor

Criminal Justice report: He is interested in creating some action items for the disproportionate incarceration dilemma – frustrated with meetings and not going anywhere. He has been attending meetings for 30 years and studying and there has been no progress. Taylor provided a handout – Economic Equitability in Iowa. The mission is to create an effective, efficient organizing system to train and lead Iowa citizen's especially poor, marginalized, people of color. Why: the laws of Iowa should be just and should apply to all Iowans regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status. Where the law is not applied equal for all Iowans, then we all are unjustly affected by the law. How: mobilize Iowans by canvassing various counties throughout Iowa to register Iowa to vote. Who to mobilize: community leaders, pastors/church members, relatives of incarcerated sons and daughters, unemployed individuals, and prisoners. Taylor will spearhead the committee with others who have the conviction to affect change and believe in the mission of the committee for economic equability for all of Iowa citizens.

Rudison

Subcommittee reports – he suggested to use action items from the previous meeting with Ms. Porter from The Sentencing Project – especially after hearing address from Chief Justice Cady regarding the overrepresentation in incarceration. He feels the climate is conducive to change and the need for ICSAA to make recommendations about the crack vs powder and the marijuana laws currently in place. Cheeks suggested the commission make a recommendation to the Public Service Advisory Board (PSAB) to move on those issues.

Burton commented, the city council met in Waterloo and it was suggested that some changes be made to the laws for small amounts of marijuana.

Taylor remarked there have been numerous studies and recommendations for criminal justice and nothing has been changed for 30 years. He questioned how to do it, and where does the money come from?

Rudison recommended a motion be made. Taylor motioned the commission draft a letter to legislators and PSAB to equalize powder vs crack cocaine and small amounts of marijuana, second by Davenport, approved unanimously.

Burton

Economic development report: He stated the number of jobs that will be lost in the next couple of months, over 900 at John Deere in the Waterloo area. IBM announced jobs to be lost in Dubuque area. Concerned about how it will affect people in the communities. What more can the commission do, in regards to the employment and justice issues.

Discussion about employment opportunities with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). Wong commented, Beth Townsend, became the new acting director, and how can commission engage with IWD on more outreach to the African American communities.

Davenport

Education report: Written report submitted. She will continue to monitor the predatory lending institutions of higher learning. Also, noted that it has not been quite a quarter (3 months) since last report, so her activity has not changed much. She feels need to emphasize educating the community about lending practices and continue to monitor it. She will look more into a financial tool provided by Iowa College Student Aid Commission.

Old Business:

1. DHR board – Rudison reported the legislative priorities for the board is done and they are included in handouts.
2. Legislative Day and open House – is Feb 26th not the 25th as listed on the agenda. Stone added the addresses of each local legislators are included and to invite them to the open house.
3. Iowa Juneteenth Observance (IJO) - Lawson submitted an addendum to the original presentation on 12/5/14 addressing the questions that were raised at the last meeting. The observance has operated for 26 years with no budget. The money is raised each year to hold the events. The IJO would operate independently. Discussion took place about the status of the non-profit and how monies would be handled within the state's budget. The issue will be tabled until more information and questions are answered by the attorney general's office and others before making a decision. Concerns: Staff involvement, commissioner's roles, budget issues, etc.

New Business:

1. News Editorial - Rudison made one edit in the editorial; changed 17% to 26% in the last sentence of the first paragraph. Davenport stated the second to last paragraph ending is missing from the sentence. Rudison will submit another draft with suggested changes. Taylor motioned to accept the letter with changes, second by Burton, approved unanimously.
2. ICSAA Agenda – a draft was provided by Cheeks and it was decided to add the proposal from Taylor to the agenda. Rudison, motioned to accept the agenda with changes, Taylor second, approved unanimously.

Next meeting:

Cheeks will send out potential dates for the next quarterly meeting. Rudison commented a decision should be made about Juneteenth, so he suggested meeting in early April.

Adjourn:

Move to adjourn made by Burton, second by Davenport, approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Cheeks". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kim Cheeks
Recorder